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SUBJECT: BULGARIA READY TO EXTEND IN IRAQ

REF: 06 STATE 203026

Classified By: CDA Alex Karagiannis for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is an action request -- please see paragraph 3.

12. (C) In a January 5 meeting, Ministry of Defense International Cooperation Director Yordan Bozhilov officially informed Charge and Defense Attache of Bulgaria's readiness to extend for an additional year its mission at Camp Ashraf -- currently scheduled to expire on 31 March 2007. He indicated that the next step would be an exchange of diplomatic notes between the U.S. and Bulgaria stipulating the conditions of the continued deployment, similar to those exchanged in January 2005 when the Ashraf mission was first accepted. Bozhilov also requested clarification as to whether CPA Order 17 (which governs the status of multinational forces in Iraq) was still in effect. According to Bozhilov, as soon as the exchange of dip. notes is completed, the agreement will go to the Council of Ministers for approval. It will then need to be ratified by Parliament before it can be implemented. Bozhilov requested that we complete the diplomatic note exchange before January 31 to allow for the required Parliamentary steps to be completed before the troops' current mandate expires on March 31.

13. (C) Action request: Post requests Department assistance in responding to the GOB's question on the status of forces agreement governing multinational forces in Iraq, and in providing cleared dip. note language in order to facilitate an expedited agreement. Post will email scanned copies of last year's diplomatic note to the Bulgaria desk for reference.

KARAGIANNIS